

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5635

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5354

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH WALID JUMBLATT

1. WALID JUMBLATT, LEBANESE DRUZE LEADER, AND NOMINAL LEADER OF HIS FATHER'S POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP) HAD LUNCH WITH AMBASSADOR AND DCM AT LATTER'S RESIDENCE ON OCTOBER 25. DURING THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION, WALID MADE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS:

2. THE BROAD NATIONAL FRONT (BNF) (SEE BEIRUT 4732) HAD FAILED. IT HAD PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO RECONCILE SUCH TRADITIONAL MOSLEM LEADERS AS SA'IB SALAM ON THE RIGHT AND THE COMMUNISTS ON THE LEFT INTO A SINGLE POLITICAL ENTITY WHICH COULD CONFRONT THE CHRISTIAN LEBANESE FRONT. WALID SAID HE WAS GOING TO DAMASCUS THE NEXT DAY AND INTENDED TO STATE THIS FRANKLY TO PRESIDENT ASSAD.

3. RECONCILIATION BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS IN LEBANON. IT WAS STILL POSSIBLE BUT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT. WALID SAID HE HAD NO INTEREST IN MEETING WITH BACHIR GEMAYEL, BUT MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD MEET WITH DANY CHAMOUN, WHO HAD SAVED HIS LIFE A YEAR EARLIER WHEN WALID HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED BY CHRISTIAN FORCES

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AT HAZMIEH. WALID INDICATED THAT HE WAS RELATIVELY RELAXED ABOUT THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CHAMOUNS IN HIS OWN REGION OF THE SHUF, SINCE THIS WAS ALSO CHAMOUN COUNTRY. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE KATAIB (PHALANGE) WHICH HE SAID WAS BY FAR THE LARGEST AND BEST ORGANIZED CHRISTIAN GROUP AND WAS WORKING HARD TO RECRUIT IN THE SHUF.

4. WALID INDICATED THAT HIS RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS WERE UNEASY. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY ANNOYED THAT THE PLO LEADERSHIP HAD CHOSEN TO DEAL WITH THE MURABITUN INSTEAD OF WITH HIM IN SEEKING LEBANESE LEFTIST AGREEMENT TO A "BALANCED SOLUTION" IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND MENTIONED THAT FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO BE TALKING TO THE MURABITUN WAS "LIKE TALKING TO THEMSELVES." WALID ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN VISITED BY A DELEGATION OF DRUZE SHEIKHS FROM HASBAYA, WHICH IS 50 PERCENT DRUZE. THESE SHEIKHS HAD BEEN TYPICALLY POLITE AND INDIRECT BUT THEY HAD MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO BE RID OF THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN THEIR AREA. WALID SAID HE HAD HEARD THERE WERE 7,000 ARMED PALESTINIANS IN THE SOUTH AND HE WONDERED IF THE LEBANESE ARMY UNITS TO BE SENT THERE COULD CONTROL THEM AND WHERE THEY WOULD GO. HE COULD NOT BLAME THE PALESTINIANS IF THOSE FORCED TO LEAVE THE SOUTH WERE TO ATTEMPT TO MOVE INTO THE SHUF, BUT IF THEY DID SO THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE.

5. ON THE ROLE OF THE USSR IN LEBANON, WALID WAS NONCOMMITAL, IMPLYING THAT THE SOVIETS HAD WORKED PRIMARILY THROUGH THE SYRIANS AND AL-FATAH. HE REMARKED THAT HE AND RASHID KARAMI WOULD BE AMONG LEBANESE DELEGATION GOING TO MOSCOW FOR THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE USSR AND THAT THIS WOULD BE HIS THIRD VISIT. HE DID NOT SEEM ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GOING BUT SAID THAT THERE WERE 150 OF "HIS" STUDENTS AND A DOZEN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED FIGHTERS IN THE USSR WHOM HE SHOULD VISIT.
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6. ON PRESIDENT SARKIS, WALID SAID HE WAS COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY LEBANESE CHRISTIANS. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED RECENT SHOOT-OUT AT BRIH AS AN EXAMPLE, SAYING THAT SEVERAL OF ACCUSED WHOM HE HAD TURNED OVER TO THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES WERE STILL BEING HELD, EVEN THOUGH THE GOL ITSELF HAD DECLARED THEY WERE INNOCENT, BUT NO REPEAT NO CHRISTIANS HAD BEEN ARRESTED EVEN THOUGH THREE DRUZE HAD BEEN KILLED IN THE AFFAIR. HE INTENDED TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM WITH SARKIS PERSONALLY LATER THE SAME DAY.

7. ON RELATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS, WALID SAID THAT THE ADF WAS "SITTING ON" HIS PEOPLE IN THE SHUF. HE REMARKED THAT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS NUMBERED IN THE THOUSANDS WHEREAS HE HAD ONLY A FEW HUNDRED SEMI-TRAINED "SCOUTS" AND WAS PREVENTED BY THE ADF FROM ORGANIZING A STRONGER FORCE.

8. ON THE "NATIONAL MOVEMENT," WALID SAID HE FELT AN OBLIGATION TO KEEP IT GOING BECAUSE IT WAS HIS FATHER'S CREATION. HE ALSO REMARKED THAT THIS ORGANIZATION WAS PRIMARILY FINANCED BY IRAQ, INDICATING THAT HE DID NOT LIKE THE ARRANGEMENT BUT HE NEEDED THE MONEY.

9. IN A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF SOUTH LEBANON, WALID INDICATED THAT HE TRUSTED NO ONE'S MOTIVES. HE WONDERED OUT LOUD WHETHER THE EGYPTIANS AND/OR THE SYRIANS MIGHT BE WORKING AGAINST DISENGAGEMENT IN ORDER TO ASSURE CONTINUED EMBROILMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS WITH ISRAEL, THEREBY FURTHER WEAKENING PALESTINIAN MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC STRENGTH. HE SAID THAT AS FAR AS LEBANESE FORCES IN THE SOUTH WERE CONCERNED, HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO A "BALANCED SOLUTION" WHICH PROVIDED THAT THOSE LEBANESE OF WHATEVER RELIGION OR POLITICAL PERSUASION WHO WERE NATIVE TO THE AREA COULD REMAIN, WHILE THOSE FROM OTHER PARTS OF LEBANON WOULD LEAVE.

10. COMMENT. IT IS INTERESTING TO COMPARE WALID'S REMARKS ON THE SYRIAN/ADF PRESENCE IN LEBANON WITH THOSE OF BACHIR GEMAYEL AFTER HIS RECENT TRIP TO DAMASCUS. BOTH LEADERS SEEM TO FEEL
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THAT SYRIA IS BEING TOUGH ON THEM WHILE SECRETLY HELPING THEIR OPPONENTS.

11. AS INDICATED ABOVE, THE CONVERSATION COVERED A LOT OF GROUND, NONE OF IT VERY THOROUGHLY. WALID GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF BEING VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT HE IS HIS FATHER'S SON AND NOT QUITE CERTAIN OF HOW TO COPE WITH THIS LEGACY. HE IS STILL SEARCHING FOR HIS OWN ROLE. BECAUSE HIS NAME IS JUMBLATT, THIS ROLE IS CERTAIN TO BE AN IMPORTANT ONE AND THE SOVIETS ARE WOOING HIM ASSIDUOUSLY.
PARKER

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